

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L 15279

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, UR, CH, KN
SUBJECT: SOVIET VIEWS ON CHINA, KOREA

REF: MOSCOW 14529 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY. SOVIET SINOLOGISTS CLAIM THAT MOSCOW'S PARTY-
LEVEL CONDOLENCE MESSAGE ON MAO'S DEATH WAS NOT INTENDED
AS A GESTURE TO PEKING AND THEY EXPECTED RELATIONS TO REMAIN
LARGELY UNCHANGED FOR A FAIRLY LONG PERIOD. ONE "OPTIMIST"
SAID THAT HE COULD FORESEE SOME GRADUAL IMPROVEMENT IN
ECONOMIC TIES, BUT HE SAW POLITICAL IMPROVEMENT AS A
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"COMPLICATED" QUESTION ON BOTH SIDES WITH NO "PRESSURE"

FOR CONCILIATION ON THE SOVIET SIDE. THE SOVIETS SAW CHINA SEEKING IN THE LONG RUN TO BALANCE ITS RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. AND THE USSR WHILE AVOIDING INTIMACY WITH EITHER. ONE SOURCE DISCUSSED KOREA, VOICING "REGRET" OVER THE PANMUNJOM INCIDENT AND ASSERTING THAT CONFLICT WAS UNLIKELY.

2. VISITING DEPT OFFICER MCCALL AND EMBOFF CALLED LAST WEEK ON LEV DELYUSIN, CHIEF OF THE CHINA SECTION OF THE SOVIET INSTITUTE OF ORIENTAL STUDIES, AND GREGORY SUKHARCHUK OF THE SAME SECTION TO DISCUSS SOVIET VIEWS OF CHINA AND SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS. SOME OF THE POINTS MADE BY THE SOVIETS WERE SIMILAR TO THOSE REPORTED REFTEL, BUT THE DISCUSSION PROVIDED SOME ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS INTO SOVIET THINKING IN THE EARLY POST-MAO PERIOD.

3. ON THE SOVIET CONDOLENCE MESSAGE, THE SOVIETS SAID THAT IT WAS SENT OUT OF "POLITENESS" ON THE DEATH OF AN IMPORTANT LEADER, BUT WAS NOT INTENDED AS A GESTURE. DELYUSIN SAID THAT IN REJECTING THE MESSAGE, THE CHINESE SHOWED THEMSELVES TO BE STRICT "FORMALISTS." AND THIS EXPLAINS THEIR UNWILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT THE PARTY MESSAGE. HE SAID THAT THIS REJECTION WAS NOT SIMPLY ANTI-SOVIET, SINCE THE CHINESE HAD ALSO REJECTED THE MESSAGES FROM WESTERN EUROPEAN PARTIES WHICH WERE HARDLY CLOSE TO MOSCOW. DELYUSIN CONTINUED THAT IN ANY CASE THE SOVIETS WERE NOT EAGER TO SEND SIGNALS YET. THEY BELIEVE THAT THE CHINESE WILL CONTINUE THE SAME GENERAL LINES AND POLICIES, AND THAT NONE OF THE SUCCESSOR LEADERS WOULD EXPOSE HIMSELF TO CRITICISM BY SEEMING TO SOFTEN THE LINE TOWARD MOSCOW. SUKHARCHUK ECHOED THIS POINT, ADDING THAT THE SOVIETS WERE UNDER NO PRESSURE TO SEEK A MORE CONCILIATORY RELATIONSHIP.

4. NEVERTHELESS, DELYUSIN WENT ON TO HINT AT TWO FACTORS WHICH COULD, OVER A LONGENOUGH TIME, MOVE THE CHINESE TOWARD A LESS HOSTILE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE USSR. THE FIRST FACTOR WAS THE "FLEXIBILITY" OF POLITICAL LEADERS, WHO HAVE "NO PERMANENT FRIENDS, ONLY PERMANENT INTERESTS," HE SAID. IN THIS REGARD, HE

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CITED A STATEMENT BY MAO TSE-TUNG IN 1937 ASSERTING THAT CHIANG KAI-SHEK WAS A PATRIOT AND AN INDISPENS-
ABLE LEADER. POLITICAL LEADERS UNDERSTAND THE NEED FOR FLEXIBILITY AND ARE NOT UPSET BY INCONSISTENCY, DELYUSIN SAID. CHOU EN-LAI WAS BOTH FLEXIBLE AND "REALISTIC," DELYUSIN CONTINUED, AND HE WAS NEVER CONSIDERED ANTI-SOVIET, DESPITE HIS OCCASIONAL USE OF SHARP RHETORIC. SIMILARLY TENG HSIAO-PING, WHILE LESS

FLEXIBLE, WAS ALSO "REALISTIC" AND PRAGMATIC. DELYUSIN AND SUKHARCHUK DID NOT COMMENT ON THE CURRENT CROP OF SUCCESSOR LEADERS, EXCEPT TO MENTION THAT THEY DID NOT EXPECT CHIANG CH'ING OR WANG HUNG-WEN TO GAIN MAJOR ROLES.

5. THE SECOND FACTOR IN DELYUSIN'S "OPTIMISTIC" SCENARIO WAS THE GROWTH OF ECONOMIC EXCHANGES. HE HASTENED TO ADD THAT THE CHINESE, IF THEY REMAIN CONCERNED ABOUT IMPROVING THEIR INDUSTRIAL PLANT, WOULD CONTINUE TO BUY SUBSTANTIAL QUANTITIES OF WESTERN AND JAPANESE TECHNOLOGY. "THEY THINK IT'S BETTER THAN WHAT WE PRODUCE, AND THEY'RE RIGHT," HE SAID, ADDING "THAT'S WHY WE'RE BUYING FROM THE SAME PLACES." BUT HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT "THERE ARE CERTAIN FIELDS IN WHICH OUR EQUIPMENT IS GOODENOUGH, AND IT'S LESS EXPENSIVE."

FURTHERMORE, HE SAID, THE USSR IS ABOUT THE ONLY LIKELY BUYER FOR SOME OF THE THINGS WHICH CHINA PRODUCES. "NOBODY ELSE WANTS THEM," HE SAID. SO IT WOULD BE A NATURAL PHENOMENON FOR THE TWO SIDES TO EXPAND THEIR EXCHANGES, AND IT IS LIKELY THAT SOMEONE IN THE PEKING LEADERSHIP WILL SEE THIS EVENTUALLY. ONE CANNOT ESTIMATE HOW LONG THIS MIGHT TAKE--PROBABLY SEVERAL YEARS, DELYUSIN SAID-- BUT IT WOULD BE A REASONABLE DEVELOPMENT.

6. MOVEMENT ON POLITICAL QUESTIONS WOULD, HOWEVER, BE "COMPLICATED" AND "MUCH MORE DIFFICULT" FROM BOTH SIDES, HE SAID. EVEN UNDER THE MOST OPTIMISTIC POSSIBILITIES, HE COMMENTED, IT WAS INCONCEIVABLE THAT THE TWO COULD EVER RETURN TO THE SORT OF INTIMACY WHICH MARKED THEIR RELATIONSHIP IN THE '50S. IT WAS ALSO CONFIDENTIAL

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HIGHLY IMPROBABLE THAT THE CHINESE WOULD SEEK SUCH INTIMACY WITH ANYONE ELSE. RATHER, THEY WOULD SEEK TO MAINTAIN DISTANCE FROM ALL OUTSIDERS, AND EVENTUALLY MOVE TOWARD A MORE BALANCED RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND THE WEST WHICH COULD BE MANIPULATED TO CHINA'S ADVANTAGE. THE SOVIET UNION, FOR ITS PART, WOULD NOT MIND SUCH A RELATIONSHIP, BUT IS NOT INCLINED TO DO ANYTHING SIGNIFICANT TO BRING IT ABOUT. THERE WILL BE NO SOVIET CONCESSIONS ON THE BORDER ISSUE. DELYUSIN ASSERTED, AND SUKHARCHUK ADDED THAT THE SOVIET POSITION IS ALREADY REASONABLE--EVEN GENEROUS--AND THERE IS NO NEED TO CHANGE IT. ON THE RIVER ISLANDS, THE SOVIETS HAVE PERMITTED THE CHINESE TO USE THOSE ON THEIR SIDE OF THE RIVER AND HAVE NOT ENFORCED THEIR CLAIM, ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE THE RIGHT TO DO SO. LIKEWISE

IN CENTRAL ASIA, THE SOVIETS HAD "PERMITTED" CHINA TO USE LARGE AREAS OF OPEN LAND, EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE LEGALLY SOVIET TERRITORY. (COMMENT. SUKHARCHUK WAS NOT PRECISE ABOUT THE LATTER POINT, BUT IMPLIED THAT IT REFERRED TO A COOPERATIVE ARRANGEMENT DURING THE '50S, SINCE RESCINDED. END COMMENT)

7. DEPTOFF ASKED WHAT CHANCES THE SOVIETS SAW FOR DRAWING CHINA INTO DISCUSSIONS OF INTERDEPENDENCY ISSUES (E.G. DISARMAMENT, FOOD, ETC.). DELYUSIN RESPONDED THAT CHINESE PARTICIPATION WAS INDEED ESSENTIAL TO THE RESOLUTION OF SUCH ISSUES, ESPECIALLY DISARMAMENT, AND EVERY EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE TO DRAW THEM IN. THE CHINESE, SAID DELYUSIN, NO LONGER SPOKE OF THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF NUCLEAR WAR FOR DESTROYING THE IMPERIALISTS. SUKHARCHUK TOOK A MORE CAUTIOUS LINE, COMMENTING THAT HOWEVER DESIRABLE, CHINESE PARTICIPATION WAS HIGHLY DOUBTFUL, SINCE THE CHINESE DID NOT YET REALISE THE MAGNITUDE OF THE DANGER OF NUCLEAR ARMS. FURTHERMORE, THEY WOULD NOT WISH TO DISCUSS LIMITATIONS UNTIL THEY HAD A MUCH LARGER STORE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS THEMSELVES, SUKHARCHUK CONCLUDED.

8. IN A LATER CONVERSATION, SOVIET SINOLOGIST BORIS ZANYEGIN, OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE USA AND CANADA, ALSO INDICATED THAT MOSCOW SENT ITS CONDOLENCE MESSAGE OUT OF "POLITENESS" HE ALSO SAW NO LIKELIHOOD OF EARLY CHANGE IN CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY, AND NO ADVANTAGE TO BE GAINED BY ANY SOVIET GESTURE TO

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A WEAK AND DIVIDED CHINESE LEADERSHIP.

9. TURNING TO KOREA, ZANYEGIN SAID CAREFULLY BUT FORCEFULLY THAT "MY COLLEAGUES AND MYSELF VERY MUCH REGRET THE INCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED AT PANMUNJOM." HE WENT ON TO CRITICIZE THE PAROCHIAL VIEW FROM PYONGYANG, BUT ADDED COMMENTS ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE PRACTICED BY BOTH SIDES TO MAINTAIN INTENSE HOSTILITY. IN SUCH AN ATMOSPHERE, WHEN INCIDENTS BREAK OUT, THEY QUICKLY GET OUT OF CONTROL HE SAID. IN ANY CASE, CONTINUED, THE SOVIETS BELIEVED THAT ALL OF THE OUTSIDE POWERS HAD SHOWN RESTRAINT AND DID NOT WANT ANY NEW CONFLICT TO ERUPT IN KOREA.

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